

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

YEMEN NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COMBAT GLOBAL TERRORISM

by

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ABSTRACT

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The recent terrorists' acts committed in the Republic of Yemen present a dangerous challenge to the government. The terrorists plan to shake up the pillars of security, stability, and social peace. The terrorists intended to place Yemen among the areas targeted in the world's fight against terrorism. The Republic of Yemen, a member of the international community and the United Nations, denounces and rejects terrorism; and has a national strategy to combat it. Terrorism is alien to Muslim Yemen, society and contradicts its deeply-rooted and noble traditions and values. This paper discusses the history of terrorism in Yemen and examines the national strategy to address it. This examination concludes that the Republic of Yemen has the will and a viable strategy but requires international resources to combat terrorism.

YEMEN NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COMBAT GLOBAL TERRORISM

Historical Background

Yemen suffered during the last decade from many challenges and hardships because of the growth of terrorism. This terrorism was characterized by acts of violence, kidnappings, car bombings, attacking U.S. interests and sabotage. These acts impacted on the prosperity of the national economy, the international reputation of the country and its relationships with other countries. In addition, terrorism has targeted the economic sector by bombing oil pipelines in Yemen. Here are some terrorist acts committed by terrorist groups.

- January 16, 1997, a car bomb exploded in Aden causing death and injuries among civilians. The act was claimed by a terrorist group headed by Nabil Nanakil, this group was planning to commit assassinations of key civilians and military officials and to cause sabotage against public and foreign interests.
- December 1998, a terrorist group called the army of Aden and Abin headed by Abu Alhsan Almhdar kidnapped a group of tourists. The Yemen Army sent a Special Forces unit to the scene, after surrounding them and killing some of the terrorists, the tourists were freed and captured the head of the terrorist group; whom was executed by the Yemeni justice.
- October 2000, a group from Alqaida organization attacked the USS Cole a U.S. Navy destroyer, using a boat loaded with high explosive substances that ripped a hole in the USS Cole, killing 17 American sailors and injuring 30 others.
- October 2000 a powerful explosion, believed to have been caused by a bomb, rocked the British embassy in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a. The explosion happened in a courtyard and shook the surrounding area. Damage was also caused to an adjoining school and the Dutch embassy. The blast, which comes a day after an attack on a U.S. warship, shattered windows, but nobody was injured.
- October 2002, a terrorist group from Alqaida attacked a French tanker which was carrying 400,000 barrels of crude oil when a blast ignited a fire on board, killing one crew member, and spilling 90,000 barrels of oil pouring into the Gulf of Aden.
- November 2002, gunmen attacked a helicopter carrying employees of the Hunt Corp., a U.S. oil company. Two people were injured when the helicopter made an emergency landing, and Yemeni authorities later arrested two suspects they said were tied to a terrorist group.

Security and Military Reforms

"The national security and military strategy of Yemen is to face the terrorist phenomenon from all aspects, through the broad use of all elements that constitute the nation; economic, educational cultural, social, and security.

There is no doubt that young people who commit terrorist acts are of a critical age and do not make sound choices. They also do not understand what they are doing. Surely they are victims of powerful evil leadership whom claim and finance these ignorant young people by issuing misguided religious proclamations to push them to kill innocent people and affect the economy of the country. The inefficiency of the economy and the deteriorated conditions of life make it easy for the forces of evil to recruit and train young disenfranchised people to commit what they taught them as a good path to heaven."¹ To counter information operation of Alqaida the Army should mount counter information operation to prevent the recruitment of these young people.

Establishing international cooperation include training arming and reforming Yemen forces to face new challenges .

The Yemeni government is pursuing a broad strategy to counter terrorism and organized crime by implementing a new policy affecting all aspects of society. In the security aspect the government is eliminating vulnerabilities by updating doctrine and better equipping the Yemeni Armed Forces. The government created a special unit in the Republican Army to counter and combat terrorism effectively. Also, it created the General Administration to counter terrorism and organized crime affiliated with the Ministry of Interior. The creation of the National Security Council was aimed to reinforce counter terrorism activities and tackle organized crime to achieve comprehensive national security, meanwhile the headquarters was established and began to buy equipment and instruments, and implement the doctrine. It also recruits a number of local expert The need to address the thriving phenomenon of corruption has also been noted by the IMF, which viewed the current investment environment as lacking significant improvements to enable private businesses to operate with high profit and help drive the economy forward. The creation of a brigade of border guards to prohibit smuggling, infiltration, and other illegal activities was also organized by the government. In addition to the previous measures, the government is actively disarming the population by initiation of decrees that prohibit illegal armament trade and the use of weapons.

The government in its efforts to cure the internal situation does not forget regional and international cooperation. Regionally, the government is working with its neighbors to deport illegal immigrants and other security issues. On the international scene there is cooperation

between the United States and Yemen in the field of combating terrorism where Yemeni Special Forces were trained by American Special Forces to strike Alqaida guerrilla strongholds in the mountains of Yemen.

The Yemen efforts in this field were of great value and benefit in which it can be seen from the elimination of terrorist groups and disrupt their command and control system and denying them safe havens and sanctuaries. However, a lot of things still need to be done.

Financial Reforms

The financial system in any country to fight terrorism should be based on following elements:

- The establishment of efficient financial constitutions.
- Creating mechanism to control the capital flow.
- Eliminate money laundering.
- Creation of laws that punish financial crimes.
- Establishing training programs which improve the level and capabilities of the financial system cadres in cooperation with international financial institutions.
- Study lessons learned from international experiences in different domains.

"The Republic of Yemen has taken a number of legislative and regulatory measures, as follows:

1. promulgation of Act No. 35 of 2003 on combating money-laundering (5 April 2003) which requires financial institutions and other professions involved in financial transactions (banks, currency exchange, finance companies, insurance companies, stock and securities companies, finance leasing and real estate companies):
 - not to open or hold accounts in the name of individuals without checking on them through official documents concerning them retaining copies thereof;
 - not to deal with persons without checking up through official documents concerning them and keeping a certified true copy thereof;
 - to retain all documents relating to clients and their financial transactions or commercial or financial deals, whether domestic or foreign, for a period of not less than five years from the date of conclusion of the transaction; such documents must be produced at the request of the money-laundering intelligence unit of the Bank Monitoring Section of the Central Bank, under the supervision of the Governor;

- Financial institutions are also obliged to set up systems and rules for investigations and internal monitoring to prevent money-laundering transactions in accordance with the provisions of this act and other related acts and with the assistance of the money-laundering intelligence unit.
2. under act no. 35 of 2003 on money-laundering, the Central Bank established the money-laundering intelligence unit by virtue of decision no. 48 of 2003, promulgated by the Governor of the Bank on 13 April 2003, which specified the functions of the unit;
 3. The Governor of the Central Bank also promulgated decision No. 49 of 2003 setting up the money-laundering intelligence unit (13 April 2003) comprising experienced staff of the bank representing both sides (monitoring and legal).¹²

The government of Yemen will freeze deposits held in private banks and financial institutions in Yemen at the request of another state, where such deposits are suspected of having terrorist links. The act also permits the Committee against money-laundering, on the basis of a definitive request to the Yemeni judicial authorities, in accordance with the laws in force, to trace, freeze or seize funds, assets and their related earnings connected with money-laundering offences, provided the judicial authority takes a decision on the request.

Enforcement of an order of the Central Bank of Yemen to freeze terrorism related funds or assets in a financial institution in Yemen does not take a great deal of time because it is precautionary measure: the Bank notifies the Prosecutor General and the latter applies to the President of the competent court for a precautionary restraining order. The Prosecutor General is also entitled to take precautionary measures pending the investigations and court proceeding.

What has been done is not enough; the government should continue its reforms until all gaps in the financial system will be bridged.

Political Reforms

Article 36 of the Constitution of the Republic of Yemen provides as follow: the state is the authority that establish the armed forces, the police, the security forces, and any other forces. Such forces belong to the people as a whole, and no body, individual, group, organization or political party may establish forces or military or paramilitary formation for any purpose and under any name what so ever. The Minister of Defense is the legally body authorized to recruit individuals.³

As the result of the degraded situation inherited after the unification of the country in 1990, the government decided to open the political arena to opposition parties and prohibited the possession or use of force in any form for political gain and transfers the conflict to the parliament in a peaceful instructive way.

Act No. 24 of 1988 was promulgated concerning combating the offences of kidnapping and armed interception. Yemen has also ratified and acceded to a number of bilateral and international security instruments with a number of States that prohibit the use of the territory of any party against the citizens of that State.⁴

Once again the Republic of Yemen proves that it has a role to play in the international community seen in the field of combating terrorism. This is done mainly by cooperating with its neighbors and international institutions and major coalition partners in an effort to bring down this international phenomenon by using all elements of power and outside help from the international communities and by pursuing very aggressive reforms in all aspects that constitute the country.

The international, regional and bilateral instruments to which our country is a party- the Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism and the Convention of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Combating International Terrorism and bilateral agreements-provide for the exchange of information in this field.⁵

In order to track elements of Alqaida and its network the Yemen government signed a treaty with other countries to exchange intelligence information which plays a tremendous role in preventing terrorist attacks . Yemen is also working to interrupt the flow of information through an intelligent network they built in the region. It also works to disrupt and stop all kinds of support through charities or moral support in mosques and concentration of population. The strategic intent is to drain the terrorists' pools of potential recruits in Yemen.

The Social and Economy Aspects

To be successful in countering terrorism there are many reforms to be implemented in the social and economic aspects of life. The most important thing is to create jobs and a climate that offers opportunities for young people to be integrated in the social process of eliminating poverty. People want to live a normal life where they can count on quality and capacity to build a family and buy a house with their proper money which will keep and make for better life. The challenges are big for the government to allocate resources and attract international investments in Yemen despite the security situation that is keeping international companies out of the country.

If we will be successful in doing what is stated previously, the level of life will be enhanced and the population will have stability and security, therefore will participate in developing the country and prosper in its economy. The populations will identify with the country and love it so will not participate in any criminal or terrorist acts.

The other aspect of social economy is education. The government is making great effort to build schools, improve curriculums and encouraging people to attend and obtain a high level of education. This will minimize dropping out of school in early ages and oriented those who failed school toward professional centers where they can acquire a skill that enable them to be integrated in the society and feel as efficient element in the society.

To counter the ideology of extremism and radical Islamism the government is taking control over all mosques and directing moderate scholars through mass media to explain and orient young people toward the real teaching of Islam based on tolerance and compassion. Furthermore, the Minister of Religion is in the process of implementing new curriculums in religious institutions that promote tolerance and peace and counter all other different radical ideologies.

International Support

There has been increasing intention on Yemen as the possible next major focus in the U.S. campaign against terrorism. Yemeni government forces have been a crackdown against suspected Alqaida members and supporters, and a number of armed clashes have ensued. This comes just weeks after the November 26th meeting in Washington between President George W. Bush and Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, in which the Yemeni leader promised cooperation in the struggle against terrorism and President Bush promised additional security assistance to support that effort.

Yemen's Coast Guard benefits from training supervised by American troops deployed in Operation Enduring Freedom. U.S. Special Forces train Yemeni military forces in counter-terrorism tactics. Moreover, the Yemeni government has also reformed the border guard forces and bought military boats, radar and surveillance equipment to prevent weapons and explosives from being smuggled into the country.

As a result of the increase of the security forces and necessary equipment, commercial ships entering or crossing through Yemeni ports have been spared any terrorist attacks in recent years. Thanks to cooperation, coordination, and a regular exchange of information between Coalition countries, Yemen is doing its share to help defeat terrorism.

The IMF encouraged the reforms that have been taken by the government however, stressed on three major points that the government has to focus on, the elimination of subsidies of oil products, implementation of fiscal and tax strategy, and the reduction in the wage bill through retrenchment rather than a wage freeze.

The IMF recommended that Yemen needs to address the thriving phenomenon of corruption, which viewed the current investment environment as lacking significant improvements to enable private businesses to operate with high profit and help drive the economy forward.

Conclusion

In summary, the Republic of Yemen has made great strides in implementing serious reforms in all aspects of government, financial reforms where directed to drain all financial support to terrorist groups and their supporters. Political reforms were directed to make the government more effective in dealing with terrorists and organized crimes and defuse all causes of unrest internally and internationally and convince all parties in Yemen to take their differences and discuss their problems inside the parliament. Because the terrorist phenomenon is international, the leadership of the country is dealing with their neighbors and international community in the security field. On the military side, the country had established counter-terrorism units through out the country. The government did not forget to reform the socio-economic situation to provide jobs and a good life to their population and to drain the pool of potential recruits of the terrorist organizations.

The Yemeni strategy to combat terrorism has clear goals which are security and stability in the country, economic prosperity of the people, good relationships with the neighbors also integration and a real role in the international community. The ways are all elements of power, the means however still short that leads Yemen to count on the international community to help reach the stated goals. Yemen seeks help from the international community to be able to meet its goals.

Recommendations

However, there are problems that have to be addressed more in depth in order to give the strategy a chance to succeed.

- One of these problems is corruption and bribes in the financial institutions. I recommend that the government take great efforts to implement stricter laws and punish severely the perpetrators of these crimes to restore credibility among the population to create national cohesion.
- In the security field the lack of high-tech equipment impeded the effort of the security services to effectively counter terrorism. Acquiring new equipment and armament is essential to have successful security forces.

- Because of the lack in the resources, I suggest that the international community help Yemen through the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.
- Increase the level of cooperation between the United States and the Republic of of Yemen in fields of economy, politics, military, and security.

Endnotes

¹Abd Alqader Bajmal, Terrorism in Yemen to Where (Sanaa,: Yemen Scientist Committee, 2003), 3.

²Yemen Permanent Representative to the United Nations, “Review: established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism,” memorandum for Chairmen of the Security Council Committee, New York, 21 August 2003.

³Yemen Permanent Representative to the United Nations, “Review: established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism,” memorandum for Chairmen of the Security Council Committee, New York, 4 March 2002.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.